

Message Text

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INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL OPORTO

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA

USMISSION NATO

DIA WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L LISBON 7564

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PO

SUBJECT: MORE ON LOPES CARDOSO RESIGNATION

REF: LISBON 7540 (DTG 031808Z NOV 76)

SUMMARY: REACTION TO THE LOPES CARDOSO RESIGNATION HAS FALLEN ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES. THE CONSERVATIVES ARE CHEERING AND POINTING TO DIVISIONS WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY; COMMUNIST-LINERS LABEL IT AS "A YIELDING TO THE RIGHT." BOTH LOPES CARDOSO AND SOARES ARE DEFERRING COMMENT. LOPES CARDOSO'S ANTICIPATED RETURN TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY WILL BE GREETED WITH MIXED EMOTIONS BY HIS PS COLLEAGUES THERE. END SUMMARY.

1. PRINCIPALS DEFER COMMENT: PRIME MINISTER SOARES HAS ACCEPTED LOPES CARDOSO'S RESIGNATION AS AGRICULTURE MINISTER.

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BOTH SOARES AND LOPES CARDOSO ARE DEFERRING COMMENT UNTIL

LOPES CARDOSO HAS REVIEWED HIS DECISION WITH PRESIDENT EANES. CABINET SPOKESMAN MANUEL ALEGRE HAS CONFINED HIMSELF TO STATING THAT THE POLITICAL LINE OF THE GOVERNMENT DEPENDS UPON THE SOCIALIST PARTY AND THE GOVERNMENT AS A WHOLE AND NOT UPON ANY INDIVIDUAL. ALEGRE DENIED THAT THE RESIGNATION WOULD LEAD TO CHANGES IN THE AGRARIAN REFORM PROGRAM. WITHOUT AGRARIAN REFORM, HE SAID, THERE CAN BE NO TRUE DEMOCRACY IN PORTUGAL.

2. OTHERS SEE PRECONCEPTIONS CONFIRMED: OTHER REACTIONS HAVE FALLEN ALONG PREDICTABLE LINES. THE CONSERVATIVE PRESS HAS LINKED THE RESIGNATION TO AN ALLEGEDLY IRRECONCILABLE SPLIT WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY GROWING OUT OF THE PS CONGRESS. MARIO MESQUITA'S LEAD EDITORIAL IN THE NOV 4 SOCIALIST-INCLINED "DIARIO DE NOTICIAS" LINKS THE RESIGNATION TO SOARES'S FAILURE AT THE PS CONGRESS TO EXPLICITLY ENDORSE LOPES CARDOSO'S CONDUCT AS AGRICULTURE MINISTER. COMMUNIST MOUTHPIECE "O DIARIO" LABELS THE RESIGNATION "A GRAVE YIELDING TO THE RIGHT."

3. WHO COMES NEXT?: SPECULATION NOW CENTERS ON WHO WILL REPLACE LOPES CARDOSO. THOSE PROMINENTLY MENTIONED INCLUDE: MINISTER OF STATE HENRIQUE BARROS, COMMERCE MINISTER ANTONIO BARRETO, AND PS ACTIVIST ANTONIO CAMPOS. BOTH BARROS AND CAMPOS ARE AGRONOMISTS. BARROS, WHO WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO LEFT AND RIGHT, APPEARS THE MOST LIKELY CANDIDATE, ALTHOUGH HE IS NOT ANXIOUS TO TAKE THE JOB.

4. COMMENT: LOPES CARDOSO'S FAILURE AT THE PS CONGRESS TO SUPPORT EITHER COMPETING NATIONAL COMMITTEE LIST HAS ANNOYED ALL SHADES OF PS OPINION. CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS, WHILE PERHAPS FINDING THE TIMING OF THE RESIGNATION INCONVENIENT, ARE DELIGHTED TO BE RID OF LOPES CARDOSO. THE PS LEFT WING IS UNHAPPY WITH LOPES CARDOSO'S WAFFLING AT THE CONGRESS, BUT, IF PRESSED, WILL RALLY TO HIS DEFENSE. LOPES CARDOSO, WHO WAS PS FLOOR LEADER IN THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY, WILL PROBABLY REASSUME THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY SEAT HE GAVE UP WHEN HE ENTERED THE GOVERNMENT. PS COLLEAGUES IN THE ASSEMBLY, WHO UNIFORMLY SUPPORTED THE PARTY LEADERSHIP AT THE RECENT CONGRESS, WILL GREET HIS RETURN WITH MIXED EMOTIONS.

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